

Attorney Docket # 3415-11

Serial No. 09/587,201
Amdt. dated November 17, 2003
Reply to Office Action dated July 16, 2003

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing groceries using a hierarchy of containment structures comprising:
- placing a grocery item ordered by a customer in a tote;
 - placing the tote onto a removable rack in a warehouse;
 - transferring the rack with the tote thereon into a first vehicle; and
 - dispatching the first vehicle to deliver the grocery item.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first vehicle is dispatched from a warehouse to a transfer point between the warehouse and a delivery destination, and the method further comprises:
- transferring the rack with the tote thereon from the first vehicle to a second vehicle;
 - and
 - delivering the tote to the delivery destination using the second vehicle.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the second vehicle is smaller in size than the first vehicle.
4. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the rack on which the tote is placed is pitched such that when a second tote is located on the rack behind the first tote and the first tote is removed, the second tote falls into a space previously occupied by the first tote by at least one of gravity and the agitation of the movement of one of the first vehicle or the second vehicle.
5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
- ordering, by the customer, [ordering] the grocery item by means of one of the Internet, phone, email, and facsimile device.

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6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein, if the order for the grocery item is accepted before a cutoff time [~~in the early evening~~] of a first day, the order is filled by the placing of the grocery item in the tote by no later than a first specified time, and the grocery item is delivered to the customer by a second specified time [~~early morning~~] on a next day.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
establishing a plurality of warehouses to stock a plurality of grocery items, wherein at least one of the plurality of warehouses is situated within a travel [~~an approximately 6-hour~~] radius from a plurality of delivery destinations, said travel radius being the furthest distance that one or more vehicles, including the first vehicle, can travel within approximately 6 hours.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
delivering the tote to a delivery destination by placing the tote into a secure expandable bag attached to a box situated outside the delivery destination.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the bag has a collapsed state and an expanded state, and the method further comprises the steps of:
storing the bag in the collapsed state within the box when the bag is not used to store the tote; [~~and~~]
removing the bag from the box; [~~and~~]
expanding the bag to the expanded state; and [~~before~~]
placing the tote in the expanded bag [~~therein~~].

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 9, wherein the bag has a lock to secure an opening in the bag, and the method further comprises the steps of:
opening the lock to provide access to place the tote in the bag; [~~and~~]
placing the tote in the bag; and
locking the lock to secure the opening of the bag [~~after placing the tote in the bag~~].

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11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the lock is a first lock and the opening is a [the] first opening which provides access to a delivery person who opens the first lock, and the bag has a second opening and a second lock to secure the second opening, and the method further comprises the step of:

opening, by the [a] customer, [opening] the second lock to gain access to remove the tote from the bag.

12. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the bag is one of a mesh net and an insulated bag.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the ordered grocery item requires refrigeration or freezing and the method further comprises the step of:

maintaining the grocery item at approximately a desired chilled temperature within the tote.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the grocery item is maintained at the desired temperature by placing a frozen insert in the tote in proximity to the grocery item.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the grocery item is maintained at the desired temperature by feeding a chilled gas into at least a portion of the tote to maintain the grocery item at approximately a desired temperature.

16. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing groceries using a hierarchy of containment structures comprising the steps of:

placing a grocery item ordered by a customer in a tote; and

delivering the tote to a delivery destination by placing the tote into a secure expandable bag attached to a box situated outside the delivery destination.

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17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the bag is one of a mesh net and an insulated bag.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the bag has a collapsed state and an expanded state, and the method further comprises the step of:

storing the bag within the box when the bag is not used to store the tote and is in the collapsed state; ~~[]~~

removing the bag from the box; ~~[]~~ ~~and~~

expanding the bag to the expanded state; ~~and~~ ~~[before]~~

placing the tote in the expanded bag ~~[therein]~~.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein the bag has a lock to secure an opening in the bag, and the method further comprises the steps of:

opening the lock to provide access to place the tote in the bag; ~~[]~~

placing the tote in the bag; and

locking the lock ~~[after placing the tote in the bag]~~.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the lock is a first lock and the opening is a first opening, the first opening provides access to a delivery person who opens the first lock, ~~[and]~~ the bag has a second opening and a second lock to secure the second opening, and the method further comprises the step of:

opening, by the [a] customer, ~~[opening]~~ the second lock to gain access to remove the tote from the bag.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of:

ordering, by the customer, ~~[ordering]~~ the grocery item by means of one of the Internet, phone, email and facsimile device.

22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the order for the grocery item is accepted before a cutoff time ~~[in the early evening]~~ of a first day, the order is filled by the placing

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of the grocery item in the tote by no later than a first specified time, and the grocery item is delivered by a second specified time ~~[early morning of]~~ a next day.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the grocery item requires refrigeration or freezing and the method further comprises the step of:
maintaining the grocery item at approximately a desired temperature within the tote.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the grocery item is maintained at the desired temperature by placing a frozen insert in the tote in proximity to the grocery item.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the grocery item is maintained at the desired temperature by feeding a chilled gas into at least a portion of the tote to maintain the ordered item at approximately a desired temperature.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of:
establishing a plurality of warehouses to stock a plurality of grocery items, wherein at least one of the plurality of warehouses is situated within a travel ~~(an approximately 6-hour)~~ radius from a plurality of delivery destinations, said travel radius being the furthest distance that one or more vehicles, including the first vehicle, can travel within approximately 6 hours.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of:
placing the tote onto a removable rack; and
transferring the rack with the tote thereon from a first vehicle to a second vehicle.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the second vehicle is smaller in size than the first vehicle.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 27, wherein the tote is a first tote, a second tote is placed on the rack behind the first tote, and the rack is pitched so that when the first tote is

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removed, the second tote falls into a space previously occupied by the first tote by at least one of gravity and the agitation of the movement of one of the first vehicle or the second vehicle.

30. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing groceries comprising the steps of:
accepting an order for a grocery item from a customer;
placing the grocery item ordered by a customer into a tote at a warehouse;
placing the tote into a first vehicle;
transferring the tote from the first vehicle to a second vehicle at a transfer point, and
delivering the grocery item to the delivery destination using the second vehicle.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein the second vehicle is smaller in size than the first vehicle.

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, further comprising the steps of:
placing the tote on a removable rack at the warehouse after placing the grocery item into the tote[s]; and
the step of placing the tote into the first vehicle comprises the step of [by] placing the rack with the tote thereon into the first vehicle.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32, wherein the tote is a first tote, a second tote is placed on the rack behind the first tote, and the rack is pitched so that when the first tote is removed, the second tote falls into a space previously occupied by the first tote by at least one of gravity and the agitation of the movement of the first vehicle.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
ordering, by the customer, [ordering] the grocery item by means of one of the Internet, phone, email and facsimile device.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the order for the grocery item is accepted before a cutoff time [~~in the early evening~~] of a first day, the order is filled by the placing

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the grocery item in the tote by no later than a first specified time, and the grocery item is delivered by a second specified time [~~early morning on~~] the next day.

36. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 35, wherein the step of transferring the tote from the first vehicle to the second vehicle at a transfer point comprises the step of:

transferring the tote during a first specified time period [~~the late night or early morning hours~~] at a location that is in use during a second specified time period different from the first [~~the day~~] by an establishment but is not otherwise in use during the first specified time period [~~late night or early morning hours~~].

37. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:

establishing a plurality of warehouses to stock a plurality of grocery items, wherein at least one of the plurality of warehouses is situated within a travel [~~an approximately 6 hour~~] radius from a plurality of delivery destinations, said travel radius being the furthest distance that one or more vehicles, including the first vehicle, can travel within approximately 6 hours.

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the grocery item is delivered in the tote to the delivery destination, and the step of delivering the grocery item comprises the step of:

placing the tote into a secure expandable bag attached to a box situated outside the delivery destination.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 38, wherein the bag has a collapsed state and an expanded state, and the method further comprises the steps of:

storing the bag in the collapsed state within the box when the bag is not used to store the tote; [~~and~~]

removing the bag from the box; [~~and~~]

expanding the bag to the expanded state; and [~~before~~]

placing the tote in the expanded bag [~~therein~~].

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40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 39, wherein the bag has a lock to secure an opening in the bag, and the method further comprises the steps of:

opening the lock to provide access to place the tote in the bag;[,]

placing the tote in the bag; and

locking the lock [~~after placing the tote in the bag~~].

41. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 40, wherein the opening is a first opening and the lock is a first lock, the first opening provides access to a delivery person who opens the first lock, and the bag has a second opening and a second lock to secure the second opening, and the method further comprises the step of:

opening, by the [a] customer, [opening] the second lock to gain access to remove the
tote from the bag.

42. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the bag is one of a mesh net and an insulated bag.

43. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the grocery item requires refrigeration or freezing and the method further comprises the step of:

maintaining the grocery item at approximately a desired temperature within the tote.

44. (Original) The method of claim 43, wherein the grocery item is maintained at the desired temperature by placing a frozen insert in the tote in proximity to the grocery item.

45. (Original) The method of claim 43, wherein the grocery item is maintained at the desired temperature by feeding a chilled gas into at least a portion of the tote to maintain the grocery item at approximately a desired temperature.

46. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing groceries using a hierarchy of containment structures comprising the steps of:

placing a grocery item ordered by a customer in a tote; [and]

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securing the tote within one of a mesh net and a bag; and
placing the one of a mesh net and a bag containing the tote that contains [containing]
the grocery item into a box outside a delivery destination, wherein the one of a
mesh net and a bag is stored within the box in a collapsed state when not in an
expanded state containing a tote.

47. (Cancelled)

48. (Withdrawn) A system for securing an item outside a delivery destination, comprising
a box secured outside a delivery destination, the box having a cavity,
an expandable bag secured to the box, the bag being storable in a collapsed state
within the cavity and expandable outside the box to an expanded state in which
the item may be
placed in the bag, and
a lock for securing the item within the bag.

49. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 48, wherein the item is a tote placed in the bag.

50. (Withdrawn) A box for securing a tote for groceries, the box comprising:
a cavity into which the tote may be placed, and
means for securing the tote that is placed within the cavity.

51. (Withdrawn) The box of claim 50, wherein the means for securing the tote comprises
an expandable bag placed around the tote.

52. (Withdrawn) The box of claim 51, wherein the means for securing the tote further
comprises a lock for securing the tote within the bag.

53. (Withdrawn) A rack for holding a first tote for delivering groceries, the rack
comprising:

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a shelf on which the tote is placed; and
means for mounting the shelf on a surface such that the shelf is pitched downward
when it is mounted and, when the first tote is removed, the second tote falls into
a space previously occupied by the first tote.

54. (Withdrawn) The rack of claim 53, wherein the mounting means further comprises
means for removably mounting the rack on a rack holder for removal with the tote on the rack.

55. (Withdrawn) The rack of claim 53, wherein the mounting means comprises a bracket
for mounting the rack with the shelf pitched.

56. (Withdrawn) A bag for securing an item therein, the bag comprising:
an interior;
a sealable opening to the interior of the bag,
a two-way zipper across the opening to open and close the opening, the zipper having
first and second ends, and first and second sliding pieces that close the zipper
when fully extended apart from one another,
first means for locking the first end of the zipper to the bag by locking the first sliding
piece to a first position on the bag, and
second means for locking the second sliding piece independently of the first sliding
piece to a second position on the bag different from the first position on the bag.

57. (Withdrawn) The bag of claim 56, wherein the first and second locking means each
comprise a padlock.

58. (Withdrawn) The bag of claim 56, wherein the bag comprises one of a mesh net or an
insulated bag.

59. (Withdrawn) A bag for securing an item therein, the bag comprising:
a first opening having a perimeter;

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a plurality of rings secured to the perimeter of the opening, such that the opening is closed by securing the plurality of rings in proximity to one another.

60. (Withdrawn) The bag of claim 59, further comprising a second opening having a second perimeter, and a second plurality of rings secured to the second perimeter of the second opening, such that the second opening is closed by securing the second plurality of rings in proximity to one another.

61. (Withdrawn) The bag of claim 59, wherein the bag comprises one of a mesh net or an insulated bag.

62. (Withdrawn) The bag of claim 59, wherein the item secured in the bag is a tote.